

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 19-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sugiyama et al. (US 2002/0071027 A1, hereinafter "Sugiyama") in view of Firestone (US 6,963,353 B1).

Regarding claims 19-37, Sugiyama discloses a multi-point conference system (Figure 1) comprising a plurality of terminals (meeting terminals 100) and a multi-point conference device (MCU 10) connected (via) to a plurality of terminals and transmitting/receiving image and audio to perform a conference (paragraph 19); wherein said multi-point conference device comprises:

a medium processing unit for detecting a speaker (speaker terminal selection block 13 selects a speaker terminal based on the volume levels of voice data; paragraph 47);

an image processing unit for decoding an image of a speaker and for re-encoding the decoded image when said medium processing unit detects a speaker (video data selection block 11 switches the output video data to the video data of the selected speaker; paragraphs 62-64, 72-73);

said image processing unit transmitting an intra frame as an image frame at the time of speaker switching (the video data selection block 11 transmitting the switched video data including a single intra-frame data; paragraph 81).

Sugiyama differs from claims 19-37 in that it does not specify a memory unit for holding an image from a terminal. However, Firestone, from the same field of endeavor, teaches the desirability of copying video data stored in a buffer so that when a speaker is detected, video of the speaking participant can be distributed without latency (col. 7, lines 29-40) such that it would have been obvious to an artisan of ordinary skill to incorporate such video storage and copying, as taught by Firestone, within the system of Sugiyama so that the video of a detected speaker can be distributed without delay.

3. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stella L. Woo whose telephone number is (571) 272-7512. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Curtis Kuntz can be reached on (571) 272-7499. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 2614

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Stella L. Woo/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2614